THE DANGEROUS AND ALMOST DESPERATE STATE OF RELIGION.

Together with Some Things in Order to its

RECOVERY.

Represented in

A DISCOURSE

Upon *EZEKIEL.* XXXVII. 3.

By HENRY HESKETH *Rector of* Charlewood *in* Surrey, *and Chaplain in Ordinary to* HIS MAJESTY.

LONDON,
Printed by *Tho. James* for *Will. Leach* at the *Crown* in *Cornhill*, near the *Stocks-Market*. 1679.

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Imprimatur.

GUIL. FANE.

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To The Honoured the Lady Bludder.

Good Madam,

When I received your Commands for a Copy of this poor Discourse, I did readily comply with them, knowing how much I owe to all Persons of Honour and Vertue.

But truly when some others also, who had an equal Command over me (whether moved by your Example or no, I know not) required the same too; then I, confess, to avoid the drudgery of so many Tran-

scriptions, I chose this easier way, in which (though I am very sensible) I run a greater hazard, yet I am well pleased that I avoid more pains.

Whatever the Discourse be, You and those other Persons of worth, must be pleased to stand responsible for the Imperfections of it. And I am no further concerned in it, or for it, then to wish it may (in some poor measure) answer your Expectations, and minister in some instance to your Religion, and be accepted as Testimony of the Respects and Obedience of

Madam,

Your most obliged and

most humble Servant,

HENRY HESKETH.

The Dangerous and almoſt Deſperate STATE OF RELIGION.

EZEK. XXXVII. 3.

Son of man, can theſe bones live? And I anſwered, O Lord God, thou knoweſt.

THE *Grecian* Proverb that repreſented *Man* under the Emblem of a Bubble, doth not more happily ſet forth the fickle ſtate of his being, then it doth expreſs the ſtrange vafrarious inconſtancy of his humours and paſſions in that ſtate of being.

Now he ſwells and looks big and gay, while a favourable wind fills his thin film of hopes; and anon ſinks down into a dull flatneſs of deſpair, when an adverſe drop falls upon his head.

He rides indeed ſtill upon the face of a rowling Abyſs of Waters; and while the Surface of theſe is pretty ſmooth and calm, nothing is more apt to be

vainly presumptuous and confident, his Tongue knows no Language but Jollity and Mirth, and forgetting his frail State, he thinks his rising Wave to be a Mountain, and that Mountain strong, and that himself sits too fast upon it, ever to be moved.

But when the Scene changeth, and the Winds grow high, and boisterous, and the Drops fall thick upon the Head, he sinks quickly into a low flatness, and nothing remains more of him, but a silly Froth, the result either of his Impatience, that his state is alter'd; or of his mad Despair, that he should ever revive again, and emerge out of so great and doleful a Condition.

These (*Beloved*) are the Vanities and Miseries of men, the two great Rocks upon which most men miscarry, and suffer the Shipwrack of their Wisdom and Reason, while very few (and those not without great skill and care) pass safely by them.

I have lived to see these two have their vicissitudes, and twice successively to take place in the men of this Generation.

I have seen mens grateful Anthems sadly exchang'd for hanging their Harps upon the Willows in a *strange Land*; and successive to both these (as if Humane Joys and Sorrows kept continual rounds:) I have seen those very men who not long ago spake no Language but that of an Ecstatick Joy, and whose hopes of happiness were great as any thoughts would make them: sit down presently in as deep a sorrow, as a great disappointment can create, and despair of ever seeing better possibly produce, without the least sign of any hopes at all; nay not giving way to the least smile, unless it be to deride the vanity of their former confidence.

In

In such a state as this, I fancy the *Jews* were, at the time of this Converse of God with the Prophet: Those that had formerly with so much confidence cried out, *The Temple of the Lord are we*; and in that vanity laughed at all the Prophetical Denunciations of Wrath and Judgments.

Now when they experimented the vanity of their former hopes, and felt themselves smarting under a heavy Calamity, are as much in the other extream, and can as little hope for the changing of their present miserable, as formerly they dreaded the alteration of their better state.

To revive which dead hope of theirs, and inspirit them again with a patient expectation of better, God Almighty shews his Prophet the possibility of such an happy exchange, by such an Instance and Symbol, as at the same time that it puzzled his Reason to tell how it should be done, did yet abundantly assure his Faith that it might be done: *Son of man, can these bones live*? Canst thou think such a thing possible to be done? Or canst thou tell any way by which it may be done? No saith the Prophet; but for all that, doth not presently despair of it, or conclude it impossible; but humbly betwixt hope and fear answers, *O Lord God thou knowest*.

The Text easily divides it self into these two parts;

I. A Question on Gods part, in these words, *Son of man, can these bones live*?

II. The Answer on the Prophets part, in these, *O Lord God, thou knowest*.

I. I shall begin with the Question, in which God Almighty represents the state of *Israel*, under the symbolical notion of *dry scattered bones*, and then

puzzles the Prophet with queſtioning of him, *Whether theſe bones could live?* Whether he could ſee, or apprehend any poſſibility of ſuch a peoples emerging out of ſo very low, and almoſt deſperate a condition, and recovering again their priſtine life and glory? *Son of man, can theſe bones live?*

Upon which Queſtion, that I may pertinently proceed, I ſhall not ſtay to take notice of the Title God here gives the Prophet [*Son of man*] though I might let fall a good Note from it, and tell you, that 'tis uſed by God as an Antidote againſt that pride, that might perhaps ſeiſe the Prophet from the abundance of revelations.

And indeed amongſt all the Conſiderations that can be entertain'd, to prevent pride, and cure conceitedneſs; there are few like to be more effective than this. τὸ δὲ ἀνθρώπου τύπου, &c. ſaid the poor Moraliſt after all his Prophylacticks to this purpoſe, *Remember that thou art a man*; which is but another name for Worm and Weakneſs: and than which there is not a more infirm, pitiful, indigent Creature in all the World.

But I ſhall paſs this Conſideration, and proceed upon the Queſtion, according to the direct intent and purpoſe of it; in which the Improbability of this peoples recovering their ancient life and glory, is ſymbollically repreſented by the great improbability of *dry ſcattered bones* recovering life again.

In ſpeaking to which, I ſhall (as method will require me) do theſe two things:

1. Make good the intended ſenſe of the Emblem, and the propriety of it, to repreſent what is intended by it.

2. Shew

II. Shew the Anallogy of the thing, make reference of it to its great purpoſes, with reſpect to our ſelves.

I. Then, if we conſider the Symbol barely in it ſelf, we ſhall ſoon ſee the ſignificancy and propriety of it: For there are few things that can more livelily repreſent the hopeleſneſs, and natural impoſſibility of life, than this Emblem doth.

There are theſe three Conſiderations or Circumſtances, any one of which bids fair for this Impoſſibility, but all of them together much more.

1. That they are repreſented onely as *bones*.
2. As *dry bones*.
3. As *dry bones ſcattered, and parted aſunder*; both theſe are in the emphatical Pronoune [*theſe*] *Can theſe bones live?*

1. For firſt, Conſider them onely as *bones*, and that alone will preſent them in a circumſtance that bids ſtrongly againſt their living. For *bones* are ſuch parts of the *body*, that may truly be ſaid to be Inanimate; 'tis true, Vegetation they have, and may be ſaid to live that loweſt kind of life, as *Plants* do (yea as ſome *Stones* do) *i. e.* to acreſs and grow, but otherwiſe they live not; for it is certain they are in themſelves ſhort and void of all Senſation, and conſequently of any rational Information.

For though it be moſt true, and muſt be ſo acknowledged, that in all Fractions and violent Diſtentions of them, we are ſtill ſenſible of a very ſmart pain; yet it is as true, that it is either the *Perioſtium* without the Bones, or the Marrow within them, or their afflicting ſome approximated Nerves and Muſcles, that cauſeth that dolorous Senſation: Abſtract them from theſe

these relations, divest them of the one, and extract out of them the other, and let no Approximated Sensible be disturbed by them, and they shall be no more sensible of pain upon the violentest Fraction, than a Stick is, when it suffers the same (though never so often repeated) Viobraces.

So that consider them onely in this first circumstance, and God may well propose it as a strong Improbability that they *should live*.

2. But secondly, Though as *bones they could live*; yet certainly such *bones* as these could not do so: for look into the Verse immediately preceding, and you'll find they were *Valde sicca*, very dry; all the moisture by which they grew formerly, was quite exhaled and gone, and they were very, or exceeding and quite dry: And I dare appeal to any, whether this present them not in a circumstance, that bids much more strongly against any possibility of life.

For let it be granted that Bones do live, (as indeed they do, that lowest kind of life already named) yet I am very sure, they cannot be said, or thought to do this, when they are quite dry.

Moisture is even absolutely necessary to life in all Bodies whatsoever; and indeed is so evidently necessary and requisite, that there have not wanted wise men in the world, who have asserted ἐκ ὕδατος πάντα, and truly it seems to receive some countenance from the Mosaick Philosophy, in which the *Spiritus super aquas*, is spoken of as the great Parent of all living things.

Let it be granted, that even our Bones are said to *grow and flourish like an Herb*, Isa. 66. 14. Yet as the wise *Bildad* saith to *Job*, Job. 8. 11. *Can the rush*

grow

grow without mire? Can the flag grow without water? So say I, Can that Bone grow without moisture? Can any Plant flourish that is quite dry? No certainly, we know it cannot.

So that, though *Ezekiel* could grant it possible that *Bones might live*, yet he might well look upon it as an impossibility that *these dry bones should live*.

3. And yet thirdly, If they could, yet these Bones could not do so, for another great reason; for the Context tells you, they were not onely *Valde sicca*, but *confuse dispersa*, strangely and confusedly scattered abroad each from other; and though *dry bones could live*, yet I am sure, disjoynted, scattered bones, cannot do so.

Life consists in union all men know, and to separate parts, to dismember a Body, is but another word for killing of them and it too. Union is most truly said to be the Soul of the Universe, and that Tye which holds all things in life and being. All the most common observations of men, every daies Experiments combine together for the confirmation of this truth. The Soul requires an union amongst those parts that it is to inform and animate: and to think that bones parted asunder should live, is just like the Story of that Saint, who carried his Head (after it was cut off) in his hands, a considerable space, to the place where his Oratory should afterwards be erected. A Story fit onely for the *Roman Legends*, and which will undoubtedly proclaim the Believers of it the onely *Goliahs* for Faith, whom all the Armies of *Israel* cannot find a Champion to answer.

This were to suppose things to live quite contrary to all Laws of *Nature* and *Providence*, and to require

God

God to work a Miracle, that should exceed all Miracles that ever were, unless it be that of *Transubstantiation*. For I shall sooner (and I think I have more reason to) believe a single bone can live, than that a little piece of a Wafer should be the perfect Body of Christ Jesus.

I find a Story of a great Miracle near Grand *Cairo* in *Egypt*, which asserts the partial rising of Arms and Legs, and other parts, upon *Good-Friday*, and the Eve preceding: But (besides the just reason to doubt the credibility of the Story) this our case sure exceeds it; for those parts though seeming to grow, are not yet supposed to have any life or sense.

Alas the fixed Laws of Providence require life in another way; scatter Bones abroad upon the Earth, and you'll find that if they do not as Bones in the Sands of *Tzinem* in *Egypt*, turn into Stones, yet in a little time they revert to dust, and are buried in the Lap of their great Mother.

Nay I shall add yet further, that these Bones cannot live by the power even of the Almighty, while dispersed; they are therefore by a Miracle of that power, first brought together, by a second Miracle of which they are afterwards enlivened.

So that consider them purely as they are here represented, and it may well puzzle the Prophet to tell, whether there be any possibility that they should ever live.

And thus I have done as much as I judge needful on this first Proposal, to shew the significancy of the Emblem. I shall therefore now proceed to,

2. The second thing proposed, that having seen the Τερόνασις, you may now view also the Ἀπόδωσις. Having seen

Then the Emblem, you may see also the substrate matter. Consider the Analogy betwixt them, and hear the reference of the words to their great purposes.

I do not purpose to let you see, how truly the state of *Israel* doth answer that of these *dry scattered bones* in the Text. I have a design to bring the Symbol something nearer to our own doors, and to venture to tell you, that the younger Sister hath fallen into the Seat of the elder; and we, as we have transcribed the Sin, so have succeeded in the Punishment of this people.

But first, I must beg you to be assured I have nothing to do with the States-man's part, I utterly disclaim it: Neither shall any thing I intend to deliver, have any aspect at all upon the Civil State of things among us. Blessed be God we are neither in a Foreign Captivity, nor Home Thraldom; we are no *bones* in that respect: Though (I doubt) if Magistrates spoke their experience, they might call us *bones* in another; rigid, stubborn, inflexible people, that will neither grow right of our selves, nor admit of their help to rectifie our aberrations, and consociate our fractions, and perhaps they might call us *dry bones* too.

But I have no warrant to meddle with these things; I shall onely consider us, with respect to our Religious and Ecclesiastical state: for I am deputed as one (though the least amongst Ten thousands of my Brethren) that is to regard the Spiritual Interests of Men, and see to the great Concerns of their Souls. And when we are consider'd in this Capacity, I fear there will be found too great cause, to compare us even to these *dry scattered bones*.

1. First, Even as they, dead and insensible.

Dead even in *trespasses and sins*; the Scripture warrants the Notion, and God knows it is too easie a matter to make this Application of it. Every man may easily expatiate on this Theme, and the Tongue of the greatest Stammerer speak this Truth too plainly.

We have not onely our own old sins which we used to be infamous for, but we have transcribed the sins also of all our Neighbour-Nations, and adopted them into our own practice, as though we scorned there should be any Title unto Death which we could not plead as well as any others.

And yet it were well, if this were the worst, if our sins were within the reach of president it were well: but alas we scorn to be counted such puny Sinners; we can out-do all Originals, think it a glorious thing to turn the Devils *Ingeniosi*, scorn the old Antique unfashionable instances of wickedness, and not think it enough till (like him that fired the Temple at *Ephesus*) we grow famous for daring and unheard of Villanies.

And (that which adds mightily to the misery of all this) we are insensible of these things, and of the guilt that attends them: and then they say no Diseases are more dangerous than those that stupifie, and take away all sense of their being so; a *Laodicean* Lethargy is of all Diseases the most dangerous, even God himself being Judge. And there is nothing more symptomatical, than not to be affected with a sense of our danger: For so have I heard a poor man in a *Delyrium*, talk of ease and health, when suddenly his breath failed him, and the next office was to dispose him for his Funeral.

Alas could we be either awaked out of this ſtupifying Lethargy, or be recovered to a ſenſe and feeling of our pain, there might be ſome hopes; but if our Senſe be gone, our Conſciences ſeared, and no Searifications can affect us, none of theſe ſevere Judgments from Heaven make us ſmart, the Phyſician may well deplore us, and deſpair of us, and we need not take it ill to be told, that we are even *as theſe bones*.

2. Secondly, Juſt like them we are *dry too*; dry beyond the reach of *Egyptian Mummy*, and to a degree beyond all Arts of Embalming. Bleſſed Lord! were there but any ſign of repentance, we might yet hope; but alas this is looked upon as a thing out of faſhion: the firſt crime in the ſenſe of this Generation is to bluſh at a Crime, but it is impardonable to be ſorry for it: One wickedneſs muſt be cured by more, and to look back from this Plow is counted unmanly and ruſtick.

But alas this is not the worſt, it were well if we onely fail'd to be ſorry; but we do not onely do ſo, but grow jocular and merry at them, make a light matter of the groſſeſt impieties, ſport with our greateſt Crimes, and even glory in our Shame.

A Mourner in *Sion* were almoſt a Prodigy in this Age, and a Tear to bewail and waſh off the guilt of theſe Crimes, were juſtly worthy of a Golden Record.

3. Thirdly, As if our Caſe ſhould be finally deſperate, we are like theſe *bones ſcattered aſunder too*; your own obſervation, and open evidence here, will ſave me the pains of enlarging further.

Challenge any Charnel houſe in the world, to ſhew

you bones more confusedly huddled together; or strangelier dissever'd than we are at this day.

Well-saye the *Corinthian* Schismaticks saying, that said onely, *I am of* Paul, *and I of* Apollo, *and I of* Cephas, *and I of Christ*. We have Factions that must Entitle themselves from another kind of *Antisignani* than these, and can take denomination from none of them.

Never was there certainly an exacter Transcript of the mad *Eastern Babel*, than among us at this day; One calls that fluid sand, which another builds upon as firm Stone: One in his pure *Hebrew* calls for help to build and raise, while another in his degenerate *Samaritane* crieth, *Demolish and raze it even to the ground*.

I may very well borrow the *Psalmists* words, to set forth our state in this respect by, *Our bones lye scattered before the Graves mouth*. Like as when one cleaveth Wood on the Earth, onely with this difference, we need no Wedges to cleave us; we scatter fast enough of our selves, without the help of any such violent impellent.

So that if *scattered bones cannot live*, if *Schisms* and *Factions* be the Stenches of dead Corruption, we have that Symptom of Death upon us. And therefore another sad Instance, in which we resemble *these bones*.

And now (my *Beloved*) I shall beg you to be Judges. Tell me whether he that considers these things, may not think he hath reason to go and ring out our Knell? May not the Mourners too justly go about *these Streets*? May not the Minstrels sing out *Epicedium*, and cry, *Ah Lord, where is thy glory, where*

where is the honour of that Church? Where is the beauty of that Virgin, whom Kings of the earth have greatly prais'd, and one of the best of Kings died for love of?

I speak this to affect your hearts, that they also may bear their parts in this Funeral Solemnity; that while you (through the blessing of a gracious God) sit in your Cieled Houses, you may cast some thoughts upon that House of God that lieth neglected and waste. Let the bleeding state of Religion affect your Souls; and this the rather, because every one is greatly concerned in it; it being with us, as with *Egypt* of old, no House in which there was not one (I fear more than one) dead.

Who knows how soon the Turtles voice may cease to be heard any more in our Land; And the voice of those Daughters of Musick be turned into hollow Groans, and dying Convulses? There are so many dreadful Prognostics, so many sad Symptoms, that it may well puzzle the ablest Physician to tell whether we can recover or no. *Ezekiel* were he alive again, might well be puzzled with this Question once more, *Son of man, can these bones live?*

And yet many things may come to pass contrary to mens expectations, and every thing is not really despairable that may seem to us to be so: many things may puzzle our Faith to find possibilities of, which yet through mercy only for that reason to exceed all belief; and many things may put our hope hardly to trial, which yet ought not to cause our utter despair.

This is a Consideration of great use in many Instances,

I have

stances, but in none more so, than in this that we are now upon; and the Prophet becomes an excellent Precedent to us in it: for though he could not apprehend any possibility of this thing, yet he doth not presently conclude it absolutely impossible; but humbly (as it were betwixt hope and fear) answers, *O Lord God, thou knowest.*

I spoke to the former to cure our presumption, and recover us to a just sense of our danger: And I shall speak something to this now, to prevent despair of ever recovering out of that danger.

If there be therefore ever a Mourner among us, that hath dropped a Tear for *Sion*; ever a *Jacob* that hath bewailed his poor *Joseph* as lost; ever an *Ezekiel* that hath lamented *these bones* as it recoverable; I would speak something to inspirit and breath hope into such persons.

For though the state of Religion among us be hazardous, yet say not thou presently there is no hope; I think the Apostles Exhortation proper here, and upon the same reason too; *Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompence of reward*, Heb. 10. 35. For to believe confidently, and hope strongly in great straights, is the act of a great Virtue, and for the most times mightily acceptable unto God, and often becomes a great Argument with him, to assist, and help, and crown that hope with a double reward.

And besides, Hope encourages Endeavour, and makes it brisk and lively, which Despondency is a dull thing, which damps Desire, and cramps all Endeavours, and so makes the Destruction unavoidable and remediless.

I speak

I speak these things the rather now, because I think there is great cause to do so. Mens Spirits are low, and a careleſsness and diſregard of Religion is apt to ſeaſe upon them by this means; for becauſe Endeavours have been uſed, and yet been unſucceſsful, therefore they are apt to grow regardleſs, and let things be as they will be, ſit down and be ſad Spectators of our miſery, and think it enough idlely and ineffectively to bewail the ſame. When certainly it would be much more generous and manly, ſtill to oppoſe againſt it; and better effects might be hoped for from ſo doing. What unconcernedneſs for Religion at this time will end in, we may know, and all men fore-ſee plainly. But what Zeal and contending may do, we do not know, but yet may hope. And if it were but for that onely reaſon, ſhould yet do each man this utmoſt; taking along with us good *Shecaniah*'s Encouragement to *Ezra* in as bad a caſe; *There is yet hope in Iſrael concerning this thing.*

And he that hath but his eyes fixed upon God in this caſe, as the Prophet hath in this Anſwer, may diſcover preſently enough there to encourage him, let the caſe appear never ſo doubtful.

So that I have onely three or four things more in deſign to perform:

1. To propoſe theſe Divine Stays for our Hopes, and theſe Encouragements for our Endeavours.

2. To preſcribe ſome things for thoſe Endeavours.

3. To endear all by ſome ſhort Arguments.

I begin with the Firſt: And there are Two things in God, which will yield Support and Encouragement to us in this caſe; I mean, his Power and Goodneſs.

1. Firſt,

1. First his Power: in which no man (without plain blasphemy) can suppose any imperfection or deficiency; for he that at first by his Mighty Word, could call so Beautiful a Frame and System of Things (as this World is) out of a confused Chaos and Mass of disorder: And he that at last, by the same word, can re-unite the various and dispersed Particles of our scattered Dust, and rear them up into a more beautiful Pile, than they now either do, or can constitute: Tell me, I pray, what can be thought impossible unto him?

I know, O Lord! that thou canst do every thing, and effect whatsoever is wise and good, and he blasphemes thy Being, that circumscribes thy Power.

Now this is one good Stay; *The Hearts of men are in his hand, and he can dispose them to Order when he pleaseth. He stilleth* (saith the Psalmist) *the raging of the Sea, and the noise of his Waves, and the Madness of the People, and can cause them to attend to sober Counsels, and submit to wise Sanctions, and effectually to understand the goings of their own Peace.*

And therefore as the Prophet, did once in as bad a case propose this to his People to be relied upon; so would I: *Trust ye in the Lord* Jehovah, *for in him is everlasting strength*: Isa. 26. 4.

2. But this is but satisfying the lesser part of the doubt; for few men doubt Gods Power: the greater Question is about his Goodness; that he can, we doubt not. Can you give us cause to hope that he will? Is he as willing, as able to save us? for we can desire no more.

And there is truly as little reason to doubt of this, as

as of the others; for while God is Love, and Goodness is proclaimed to be the first great Constituent of a Deity; while Power and Wisdom are but the several Modifications of his Goodness; that being the Radical, and (as I may call it) the Fundamental Perfection. I say while it is thus, there is no reason to doubt, but his Goodness is equal to his Power. Indeed it reacheth to the Heavens, and over-spreads all the Earth, and as certainly (though freely) imparts its Divine Rays to all Subjects capable of it: as we see that great Fountain of Light disperse his Beams, when above the Horizon.

And he that will consult the Scriptures, will find them very Copious in Celebrations of the Divine Goodness, and in vehement Protestations of the Truth of these things. For God loveth his Church, and hath a concerning regard to its Interest, and is tender of the welfare thereof; and therefore always ready to promote it, and to give redress to the evils of it.

And certainly these things are able to yield Support and Encouragement enough. And there is nothing more wanting, but to know what we are to do our selves, in order to the alluring the blessed Effects of this Power and Goodness. For we must not expect, and foolishly depend upon Miracles to help us: But as God worketh, so must we to our utmost work, also; the Sword of the Lord and of *Gideon* too, do well together. For as that Faith which is to procure for us Eternal Salvation, must be no lazy idle thing, but zealous and diligently active; no more must that which is to obtain for us the Resurrection of Religion, and the Glory of *Sion*.

2. There are some things to be done by us, and of these we may take our measures, by considering what it is that renders the state of *these bones* so very hazardous, and by observing the defect in them, we shall soon perceive the Remedies to be both obvious and easie.

1. The first thing is the Insensibleness of *these bones*, against which the Remedy is to consider soberly our Condition, to affect our selves with a through sense of our danger; this is always the first step to Safety, and truly in most cases a very considerable Advance towards it.

Now this Remedy sure must needs be accounted practicable, and the Prophet bids us do but a very easie thing in it. Upon the same reasons that we are men, upon the same we can consider, and we degenerate from our selves, when we fail to do so; and to consider truly in our case, is as easie as to consider at all. There needs no great art and skill to discover our Condition; God knows it is too visible, and the onely difficulty is, how to be ignorant of it.

2. The second is, that *these bones are dry*, and against this the Remedy is as easie as it is obvious.

1. For first, There are the Divine Fountains of Grace open for us to resort to at pleasure; there are Waters that issue out of Gods Sanctuary continually, by which our *dry Souls* may become irriguous and moist, and fit to receive the Impressions of Gods Grace.

And I shall take liberty to say, That as the neglect of these hath been one grand cause of our present misery; so the due esteeming of them as Conduits of Divine Blessing, and careful attending upon them as such, must procure for us this Mercy, if ever we have it;

is. It is in these that God gives Grace and Glory; and it is the conscionable attendance upon these that must obtain for us both.

2. But (if any think these too far off) we have Fountains much nearer, we have waters in our own hearts: I mean the Tears of a godly Sorrow and Repentance, which never yet fail'd either to expiate Guilt, or obtain Blessing; these Tears were never yet shed in vain, nor ever shall, if they cause *Joy in Heaven* (as our blessed Lord hath told us) they will doubtless cause the same in Earth too.

And I onely add this; While we have Wells of our own, out of which we may draw at pleasure, our continuing *dry* will be as much our guilt, as our misery.

3. The third defect in *these bones* is their being separated and parted asunder; against which also the Remedy is plain and easie: for it is Unity and Concord, a thing to which besides that we have all the Obligations possible, and so very many strict Injunctions, that there are not more to any one Duty in all the Gospel: so there is always so much Joy and Delight attending it, as is sufficient to endear it mightily to all men.

By this (my *Beloved*) must our Felicity be retrieved, or by nothing; and it is a wounding reflexion to consider, that men should not see it plainly, but cause Schisms and Factions, and pursue them too, onely on purpose to make our ruin unavoidable; quarrel and wrangle one with another so long, till we give accomplishment to the Design of our worst Enemies, which could never be effected by any other means.

And therefore it will become a seasonable Prayer at this time, *That the Wisdom of Heaven may direct, and the Blessing of it attend, the Counsels and Endeavours of Those above us, to contrive means, by which our Breaches may be healed, our Union obtain'd, and the scattered Sheep of Israel be recalled again into the great Fold, and these bones joyned together once more.*

But that I be not mistaken, I add; It is means for the uniting of *Bones*, of true parts, that I mean, though diseased; let those that are excrementitious and quite rotten, fare as they will, I would choose to be bald for ever, rather than to have those Hairs that should bring Leprosie, and want Nails while I live, rather than have those that should onely tear and irritate my own flesh; And I think it wiser to lose, than retain a mortified Member, that would certainly endanger the whole Body.

And now that we have met with the more obvious Remedies, there want but onely two or three things more, and then *these bones* will rise up into a perfect Man.

First, Nerves and Sinews to conserve and keep them together; for without these (as experience shews) they will in a little time divide and scatter again.

And these we have ready enough of both sorts, if we will permit them to do their Office.

The Internal are those bands of Love and Christian Charity; to the exercise of which, both the suggests of our own Reason, and the many Mitigated Precepts of our holy Religion, do strongly incline us; And the truth is, we must forgo our Nature, as well as aban-

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don our Profeſſion, ceaſe to be Men, as well as Chriſtians, if we act contrary to them.

The External are thoſe Laws that the Wiſdom of our Fathers have pitched upon, for the Government both of Kingdom and Church: And while we cry out againſt a Regular Subjection to theſe, as contrary to our Liberty, we do moſt palpably argue againſt the ſureſt Method to our own Felicity, and preclude the onely way to our Safety.

2. Another thing yet lacking, is, ſome Sarcoticks to cauſe *fleſh* to cover *theſe bones*, and ſome Haimaticks to breed blood to preſerve and nouriſh both.

And bleſſed be the Mercy of Heaven! we have both theſe very near and ready at hand; we may eat the *Fleſh of the Son of God*, and we may *drink his Blood in the holy Euchariſt*, which himſelf (who doubtleſs beſt knows) tells us is *Meat indeed, and drink indeed*; ſuch as will nouriſh and preſerve us Living to Eternity.

If a man by touching but the Duſt of a dead Prophet of old, was raiſed preſently to life again; who dare deny the ſame Effect to the Fleſh and Blood of the Son of God? Eſpecially ſince himſelf hath told us, *That he that eats and drinks theſe, ſhall be raiſed up unto a life that is truly immortal.*

And give me leave to tell you my thoughts, That as the Neglect and Contempt of this Sacred Ordinance hath been moſt juſtly attended, and puniſhed with our former Woes; ſo doubtleſs the due eſteem and obſervation of it, would be bleſſed with this happy and wiſhed for Reſurrection.

3. There remains but one thing more, and that is Breath and Life to be again breathed into this Body.

And

And this we may know how to obtain also; for that ever blessed Spirit of God (the Author of all Life) which at first gave Life and Being to all Things, by gently Hovering and Impregnating the New Creation; will still be as ready to Impart Life and Breath to every both single Soul and Community too, that is fitly disposed for the Reception of it.

The means to assure the Aid of this blessed Spirit, are easie and practicable also; they are pious devout Prayers: for so the Blessed Jesus by an unanswerable Conviction, hath assured us, *That God will give his Spirit to those that ask him*: Luke 11. 13.

2. And now (*my Brethren*) I have nothing more remaining, but to beg you to make tryal of these Prescriptions; And one would think a little matter might perswade men to do so: for the Effect and Consequences are enough to endear them, and there is scarce any thing to be said beyond the same, by way of Motive.

1. For if men will act according to the Principles of Honour, they will quickly perceive it Glorious, and a thing well-becoming the Ambition of a Christian Congregation, to become active towards saving of a Church, and Recovering the Life and Beauty of Religion, and the once flourishing Glory of it.

2. But if they will act onely upon the Principles of Interest, even they will become Motives here also, for every man will share largely in this great Salvation, and the happiness of all, will be the happiness also of every man: For these things are therefore conducive to the *Common Salvation*, because they are so to every mans *private Salvation*.

But what-ever the effect be, as to the Publick, yet I dare

I dare assure thus much, that every man in particular shall find the benefit; if *Sion* should not be saved, yet every man will certainly hereby save himself.

And therefore for our Religions Sake, for our Churches Sake, and for our own Sake, let us be perswaded to put these things in practise.

And then as God commands *Ezekiel* here; *Prophesie, O Son of man:* So would I; *O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.* You not onely may, but you shall live; you shall rise up as a great Army and a strong, able to Baffle not onely all the black Legion of Lusts within you, and all those Crouds of secret Enemies amongst you: But also all those *Roman Legions* of Adversaries about you, whose Hopes not long since were high, and whose Endeavours yet are unweariedly active, to Lead our *Sion once more Captive*; to cause us to *hang our Harps once again upon the Willows, by the sides of their* Marah; and finally to Convert our Songs into *Miserere* and *Lacryma*.

Which that they may never be able to effect, *God Almighty grant for his Mercies sake*; And I doubt not but all that hear me will joyn in saying, AMEN.

FINIS.